

# JAC NewsBreak

VITAL NEWS & RESEARCH INFORMATION FOR JAC LEADERSHIP CIRCLE

April 26, 2010

## On my mind this month...



Gail Yamner

This past month has been especially insidious with the rumors about a rift between the Obama Administration and the Netanyahu government. Reputable

news organizations have lifted parts of speeches and distorted them, reporting controversy where none existed.

I am not proposing that we read every speech that a politician gives or read every bill but rather that we find reputable sources that tell a story in its proper context. We suggest that you use JAC as a resource. The bi-weekly E-Z Read presents original articles on our issues. JAC is increasing its online presence to counter rumors and present the facts. For now go to our Facebook page and follow the links to our blog where we present the distortions and give the links to the primary sources. In July when our new website is completed, you will be able to quickly find the answers to rumors. You can always call or email the office (847 433-5999/ jacpac123@aol.com) with any questions.

The rumor mill is sure to be in high gear once the President appoints a nominee to fill John Paul Stevens' seat on the Supreme Court. In the upcoming session, we expect cases concerning abortion rights, funding of religious groups on campuses, and health care reform. JAC helps elect senators who sit on the Judiciary Committee that is charged with "advise and consent" on the President's nominee. The following JAC-supported senators are on the Committee: Senators Leahy (Chair), Feingold, Feinstein, Specter, Schumer, Durbin, and Cardin. Their decision on the President's choice will affect the makeup of the Court for decades to come.

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## ✡ Israel

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was interviewed Wednesday by Yonit Levy and Udi Segal on Israeli Channel Two News. Levy began the interview by saying to the Prime Minister that King Abdullah of Jordan says "if there is no political progress, there will be a war in July." Netanyahu responded that Israel very much wants to move the political process forward. "Let me remind you - on my first day in office, I called on Abu Mazen to come and negotiate, and on my first day, unfortunately, he set preconditions. We did other things - we removed roadblocks and hundreds of checkpoints. We also approved the moratorium on new construction in the West Bank...whether or not there is progress, it won't be because we didn't want progress."

Netanyahu then brought up "Iranian meddling both direct and indirect through the Hezbollah," with the object of convincing Syria that Israel is about to attack them. "This is a lie...we can always defend ourselves; we know how to defend ourselves, but this is a lie. If a lie is repeated often enough, even good people and good leaders may begin mistakenly to repeat it. Israel wants peace. Israel does not want war."

The interviewers then switched to Israel's relationship with the United States, and specifically, Netanyahu's relationship with President Obama. Levy asked why it seems that the President is hostile and "humiliated you during your recent visit." Netanyahu's response, "He's not hostile and there was no humiliation. I think things have been wildly exaggerated...Let me tell you, first of all, there were many pure inventions in the reports about the meeting...I'm not saying we agree about everything...But the talks were good talks and open talks." Both Levy and Segal pressed the Prime Minister about the U.S. demands concerning Jerusalem, and the PM responded that he has made it clear from his first meeting with President Obama and in his speech

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## 🇺🇸 United States

### CHOICE

"We are defining the word 'person' as a human being...regardless of age, level of functioning, perceived ability or disability," said Cal Zastrow, co-founder of Personhood USA. "When there is an innocent person, the law should protect them." This group of anti-abortion activists has stretched the legal definition of "person" to cover a "freshly fertilized egg in a woman's womb." Their hope is to add this definition to state constitutions, and proponents in Colorado and Mississippi have succeeded in getting these "personhood" measures on their ballots. In six other states, volunteers are collecting signatures. Ted Miller, a spokesman with NARAL Pro Choice America calls this "an abortion ban by any other name...and a backdoor to stripping away women's reproductive rights." It threatens in vitro fertilization, stem-cell research and some forms of contraception. In Mississippi, the measure is set for a 2011 ballot. That measure proposes that the term person "shall include every human being from the moment of fertilization, cloning or the functional equivalent thereof." In Missouri, personhood would start at "the beginning of biological development." Missouri already has a law, passed in the mid 1980s, that says life begins at conception. The Supreme Court ruled that state law cannot supersede *Roe v. Wade*, which gives a woman the constitutional right to terminate a pregnancy. Personhood organizers in Missouri still think they can get a measure on November's ballots. They have 300 volunteers out collecting signatures, due May 2. Two years ago, Colorado voters turned down a personhood amendment 73% to 27%. Zastrow says he is not discouraged and has personhood steering committees working in 32 states. "If we're not going to be fighting to end all abortions...then we're never going to win." (*Kansas City Star* 4/5/2010).

Governor Dave Heineman of Nebraska signed a law on April 21 banning most abortions 20 weeks after

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## Research & Races

The newest member of the House of Representatives is JAC-supported Democrat Ted Deutch. The 19th district of Florida was represented for 14 years by Democrat Robert Wexler who resigned in January to become the Executive Director of the Center for Middle East Peace and Cooperation.

### 2010 Senate

**Florida** - Republican Governor Charlie Crist is facing pressure from fellow Republicans to give up his Senate campaign. Crist said he would not allow party leaders to push him from the race and is seriously considering running as an Independent. A disclosed memorandum from the National Republican Senatorial Committee said that Crist had “zero chance” of winning the nomination against Marco Rubio. Rubio’s candidacy has been backed by Tea Party supporters and has received the unofficial endorsement of the NRSC. Gov. Crist will have to make his decision before the April 30th filing deadline. The presumed Democratic nominee for this open Senate seat is JAC-supported Rep. Kendrick Meek.

**Pennsylvania** - Recent polls indicate that the Democratic primary contest on May 18 between incumbent five-term Senator Arlen Specter and two-term Rep. Joe Sestak will be very close. Specter still shows a small double-digit lead but his support is in the low 40s and 30% of the primary electorate is undecided. The winner will face former GOP Rep. Pat Toomy who lost to Specter in the GOP primary in 2004. Specter switched his party affiliation one year ago. JAC has supported both Specter and Sestak in past cycles.

**Washington** - Senator Patty Murray (D) won her seat in 1992, campaigning as “the mom in tennis shoes.” She has been a GOP target ever since. Trying to attract a first-tier candidate, Republicans are hoping to snag former state Senator and gubernatorial nominee Dino Rossi. Rossi is a commercial real estate investment broker who lost that gubernatorial race by 133 votes in 2004. He ran again in 2008 and was defeated 53% to 47%. Rossi does not appear to have accumulated any serious negatives from these two losses. There are four announced GOP

candidates, but all have limited name identification and none is considered a serious threat to Murray.

**Wisconsin** - Now that former GOP Governor Tommy Thompson has decided against challenging Democratic Senator Russ Feingold, the Senator can begin to concentrate on the three declared Republicans: businessmen Terrence Wall and Dave Westlake and former Wisconsin Commerce Secretary Dick Leinenkugel. Wall argues “that the incumbent has been in Washington too long, has lost his populist streak, and no longer listens to voters.” Westlake, a self-described Christian conservative, is staking out a position as the most conservative in the field. Leinenkugel, of the well-known beer family, has built-in name recognition could be very helpful. His views are much more moderate than Wall or Westlake, but his only experience in elective office was a single term representing Menomonee Falls on the Waukesha Board of Supervisors. Thompson’s exit from the race gives Feingold a strong advantage.

## Separation of Religion and State

On April 6, the Florida Senate Committee on Education approved a constitutional amendment that seeks to repeal the ban on public funding of religious organizations. The bill has been pushed by Republican leaders and touted as the “religious freedom” bill. Critics say it is a pro-church effort to abolish Florida’s strict divisions between church and state. If approved by three-fifths of both the Florida House and Senate, the bill would appear on the November ballot. It needs 60% of the vote to become law. GOP st. Sen.

Thad Altman called the constitutional ban an “anti-American and prejudicial act that prohibits citizens from seeking aid from sectarian hospitals, soup kitchen, homeless shelters, work release programs and other social service providers....This will improve the quality of life of Floridians dramatically.” The measure would strike language from the Florida constitution that reads, “No revenue of the state or any political subdivision or agency thereof shall ever be taken from the public treasury directly or indirectly

in aid of any church, sect, or religious denomination.” The “No Aid” ban was added to the state’s constitution in 1885. Constitutional scholars said the change could bring legal challenges. “We don’t want to have state religion,” said Joe Little, a constitutional law professor at the University of Florida. “We don’t want government involved in religion...the Republicans of Florida can’t eliminate that without getting rid of the First Amendment of the Constitution.” (*Miami Herald* 4/7/2010)

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conception or later on the theory that a fetus, by that stage in pregnancy, has the capacity to feel pain. If upheld by the courts, the bill could change the foundation of abortion laws nationally. Current restrictions in Nebraska and elsewhere are based on a fetus’ viability outside the womb. Viability

is determined on a case-by-case basis but is generally considered to be 22-24 weeks. The Nebraska bill was also meant to shut down one of the few late-term abortion providers in the country, Dr. LeRoy Carhart. Nancy Northup, President of the Center for Reproductive Rights says, “It absolute-

ly cannot survive a challenge without a change in three decades of court rulings...Courts have been chipping away at abortion rights...this would be like taking a huge hacksaw to the rights.” The Center is considering challenging the law, as is Dr. Carhart. (*TPM News*, 4/13/2010)

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to AIPAC and in his interview with ABC News, “Our policy on Jerusalem is not going to change...there will be no freeze in Jerusalem....Not now, not later...there is complete understanding

that the idea of preconditions must be abandoned. It’s true that there are ups and downs. We do share very strong bonds that will eventually help us overcome these problems and reach

understanding....But you asked me if I was standing firm on the question of Jerusalem. I don’t hide my position – I am standing firm.”